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SUBJECT: FIRST STEP TOWARD SINGLE INDIAN NEWS AGENCY ACCOMPLISHED
 SUMMARY: SLUG LINES OF THE FOUR INDIAN NEWS AGENCIES WERE
 REPLACED ON FEB. 1 BY "SAMACHAR." THIS INTERIM STEP, BETWEEN THE
 FUNCTIONING OF INDEPENDENT SERVICES AND AN EVENTUAL "NATIONAL
 NEWS SERVICE" REPORTED AS "VOLUNTARY" MERGING. END SUMMARY.

1, ALL FOUR INDIAN NEWS AGENCIES (PRESS TRUST OF INDIA, UNITED
 NEWS OF INDIA, SAMACHAR BHARATI AND HINDUSTAN SAMACHAR) PUT ON
 WIRES FOR THEIR SUBSCRIBERS ON JANUARY 30 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AS OF
 MIDNIGHT JANUARY 31 ALL NEWS WOULD BE SOURCED TO "SAMACHAR"
 (HINDI FOR "NEWS") AS NEW NAME FOR UNIFIED INDIAN WIRE SERVICE.
 (NEW DELHI FM 4, JAN. 30, 1976). "SAMACHAR" SLUG SUBSEQUENTLY
 APPEARED ON TELEPRINTERS FEB. 1 AND WAS ONLY INDIAN AGENCY
 ATTRIBUTION USED BY NEWSPAPERS FEBRUARY 2.

2, MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING V. C. SHUKLA
 AFFIRMED IN PARLIAMENT ON FEB. 2 THAT SAMACHAR WAS THE NAME
 OF THE NEW INDIAN NEWS-GATHERING AND DISSEMINATION AGENCY,
 FORMED AS A "SOCIETY." HE SAID THAT "THE AIM OF THE NEW
 SOCIETY, REGISTERED UNDER THE SOCIETY REGISTRATION ACT BY
 SEVEN PERSONS WHO WERE LEADING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INDIAN
 PRESS" WAS THE "CREATION OF A STRONG AND WELL-EQUIPPED NEWS
 AGENCY" THAT WOULD "COVER ALL ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL LIFE
 AND PROJECT THESE ADEQUATELY ON THE NATIONAL AND WORLD MEDIA."

3, EXPLAINING THAT INTRODUCTION OF SAMACHAR NAME AND FORMATION
 OF THE "SOCIETY" WAS AN INTERIM STEP, SHUKLA SAID "THE
 MANAGING BOARDS OF THE FOUR EXISTING AGENCIES HAD ENTERED
 INTO AGREEMENTS WITH SAMACHAR UNDER WHICH THEY WOULD, FOR THE
 PRESENT, PERFORM ALL FUNCTIONS ON BEHALF OF SAMACHAR, PENDING
 FURTHER INTEGRATION." THE PROJECTED SINGLE NATIONAL NEWS
 AGENCY, SHUKLA MAINTAINED, "SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO EXISTENCE

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VOLUNTARILY AND SHOULD FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY."

4. HE OBSERVED THAT THE NEW SINGLE AGENCY WOULD HELP TO CORRECT THE "UNFAIR AND MOTIVATED CRITICISM (THAT) HAD BEEN HEAPED UPON INDIA IN THE WORLD PRESS FROM TIME TO TIME."

5. EMBASSY LEARNED FROM A PTI EDITOR THAT A TWELVE-MAN BOARD IS BEING ESTABLISHED TO RUN THE NEW AGENCY UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF G. KASTURI, PROPRIETOR-EDITOR OF THE MADRAS HINDU. WILFRED LAZROUS, AN EDITOR OF PTI IS EXPECTED TO BE NAMED GENERAL MANAGER.

6. SAME SOURCE TELLS US THE NEW AGENCY'S WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FOREIGN NEWS AGENCIES THAT NOW SELL THEIR PRODUCT TO UNI OR PTI IS BEING RE-EXAMINED. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE SMALLER AGENCIES, I.E., GERMAN, ITALIAN, YUGOSLAV, ETC., WILL BE TERMINATED. UPI'S PRESENT CONTRACT EXPIRES THIS SPRING AND, WE ARE TOLD BY INDIAN SOURCE, WILL PROBABLY NOT BE RENEWED, BUT IT IS EXPECTED THAT AP, REUTERS, TASS AND POSSIBLY AFP MATERIAL WILL BE PICKED UP AND REPLAYED (AFTER EDITING) BY THE NEW NEWS SERVICE.

7. OUR SOURCE ALSO SAYS VAGUE PLANS EXIST TO GREATLY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS WORKING FOR THE INDIAN AGENCY--TO 30 OR 40. IT IS DUBIOUS THIS WILL ACTUALLY HAPPEN. (PTI NOW HAS ONLY 4 AND UNI NONE). REPORTERS OF THE OLD AGENCIES ARE DUBIOUS ABOUT THEIR CHANCES FOR FOREIGN ASSIGNMENTS.

COMMENT: IN SPITE OF THE RATIONALE USED TO JUSTIFY THE SINGLDU NEWS AGENCY--SUCH AS THE SAVINGS BY ELIMINATING DUPLICATION AND OTHER WASTAGE OF RESOURCES--IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THAT THE REAL MOTIVATION FOR AMALGAMATION IS TO GIVE GOI FAR STRONGER NEWS CONTROL, ESPECIALLY THROUGH POSITIVE GUIDANCE IN THE SELECTION OF EDITORS AND MANAGERS. CHOICE OF PERSONNEL FOR AGENCY IS BEING MADE DIRECTLY FROM PM'S HOUSE. CHAIRMAN KASTURI REPORTEDLY OBJECTED TO CHOICE OF LAZROUS FOR GENERAL MANAGER AND WAS TOLD DECISION HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE! NEW AGENCY'S FORMATION ALSO SERVES ANOTHER LOFTY GOI OBJECTIVE, THAT OF PROMOTING THE CONCEPT OF A "NONALIGNED" NEWS SERVICE, WHICH GOI SPOKESMEN HAVE VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED IN SEVERAL THIRD-WORLD MEETINGS, ALTHOUGH SENIOR NEWS SERVICE OFFICIALS STRONGLY DOUBT THIS IS VERY PRACTICAL IDEA. SAXBE

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